**Case Example: An Analysis of the Challenges in the Life of Lucille Ball**

In studying the life of Lucille Ball, the general public is given a picture of her life in which most events went very smoothly and that she progressed through life always enjoying the sweet smell of success. On closer inspection of her life, the researcher sees that this simply is not true. The problem is that there is a discrepancy between what people perceive as the life of Lucille Ball and the reality of what it was really like. In order to address this problem, I will draw on an analysis of the unfortunate events of her life, which others have not yet considered. Applying this approach is appropriate because her life was riddled with challenges that were undoubtedly major, life changing events that certainly shaped her personality and determination to succeed. This allows for a thorough understanding of who exactly hid behind the famous Lucille Ball. To do this, I will first critically analyze each of the events in the life of Lucile Ball and make a special note of any occurrence that people would consider unfortunate. Then, I will incorporate direct quotes of Lucille Ball pertaining to any and all of these unfortunate events in order to get a better picture of how she was personally affected by them. Finally, I will interpret what I have learned about her life to speculate how these events shaped her character.

*Early Childhood: Early Death of her Father and an Uninvolved Step-father*

Lucille Ball endured the early loss of her father, Henry Ball, when she was about three and a half years old. Despite her young age, this left a lasting impression in her mind as she remembers her mother crying. She also remembers a bird flying through the window, and this led to a lifelong fear of birds. A biography written on Lucille Ball mentions, “Ball recalls little from the day her father died, only fleeting memories. A picture fell, and a bird got trapped in the house. Ever since that day she had an intense bird phobia” (Lucille Ball). To make matters worse for Lucy, her mother, Dee Dee, was forced to find work, which meant less time spent with her. Through her employment, Dee Dee met and married Edward Peterson. This event was also unfortunate for Lucy in that Mr. Peterson disliked small children and became an uninvolved step-father. When he and his new wife left town to find employment, Lucy was left in the care of her step-father’s parents. Lucy notably hated this period of her life marked by isolation and feelings of abandonment. Undoubtedly, each of these situations forced Lucille Ball to face separation. They must have also been a stimulus for her to develop a desire of independence. Furthermore, Lucy would later go on to marry Desi Arnaz. Although she loved him, it was a very difficult marriage. Despite Lucy’s filing for divorce in 1944, only four years after they were married, she endured the marriage until 1960. She expresses the impact that this divorce had on her in stating, “I hate failure and that divorce was a Number One failure in my eyes. It was the worst period of my life. Neither Desi nor I have been the same since, physically or mentally” (BrainyQuote). One can speculate that the early loss of her father, the isolation she felt from her stepfather, and her divorce from Desi played an important role in driving her to persevere. Perhaps, Lucy was afraid of the same type of separation and abandonment she endured as a young child and again in her marriage.

*Adolescence and Young Adult: Repeated Failures in School and Show Business*

The professional life of Lucille Ball is marked by repeated setbacks and failures. As a teenager, she was enrolled in a premiere drama school in New York City. Her lofty dreams were crushed when only six weeks later she was sent home by school officials who were convinced that she was too shy and lacked sufficient talent. Lucy persevered. She returned to New York City in her early 20s, but just when her career was looking promising, she developed a debilitating case of rheumatoid arthritis and was forced to return home. In her extended recuperation, she even had to learn how to walk again. Still Lucy would continue to try. Upon returning to New York, she had numerous jobs, but still the dream of being an actress survived. Lucy relocated to Hollywood after she became a Goldwyn Girl. This would begin a lengthy period in her life in which she was cast in ‘B level’ movies. Even though she gained the title “Queen of the Bs”, she persevered. Lucille Ball lived by her famous saying, “One of the things I learned the hard way was that it doesn't pay to get discouraged. Keeping busy and making optimism a way of life can restore your faith in yourself” (BrainyQuote). Undoubtedly, the many professional setbacks that Lucille Ball endured strengthened her resolve and determination to succeed. It necessarily instilled in her an uncompromising work ethic and a perfectionist attitude. Perhaps Lucy would not have developed into the television sensation she became in the 1950s had her road to success been very smooth.

*Adulthood: Miscarriages and Pregnancy*

Despite a challenging marriage, Lucile Ball desperately wanted children. This also was not an easy chapter in her life. She suffered multiple miscarriages before having her first born when she was just a month shy of her 40th birthday. Furthermore, a year and a half later Lucy was due to have her second child. The dilemma was that the number one rated television show at this time was *I Love Lucy*, but pregnant women were never before viewed on national television. Instead of shying away from this predicament, Lucy rose to the occasion. The producers of the show wrote her pregnancy into the script. Furthermore, Lucy scheduled her Cesearian section for the same day that her television character, Lucy Ricardo, gave birth. A webpage dedicated to Lucille Ball explains, “When Ball found out she was pregnant, she insisted that her condition be written into the script; it was the first time a pregnant woman had been depicted on TV. Little Ricky’s birth on January 19, 1953 drew an estimated 44 million viewers, breaking all records” (*Women Who Changed America).* Through this example, Lucy became a nationally recognized model of a ‘working mother’, and she rose to become one of the most successful businesswomen in Hollywood. Perhaps the many trials and challenges of her life taught Lucille Ball the invaluable lesson of perseverance and hard work, without which she would not have achieved the degree of talent and fame for which she is noted.

Works Cited

*BrainyQuote*. Xplore, n.d. Web. 31 Mar. 2013. <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/l/lucillebal121868.html>.

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